

# **Mercer Rubber Company**

**136 Mercer Street, Hamilton Square, Mercer County**

**A Citizen's Guide to the Public Health Assessment**

**August 2, 2006**

*A concerned citizen asked the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to look into possible exposures to contaminants from Mercer Rubber Company. As a result, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) prepared a draft Public Health Assessment document. This fact sheet summarizes NJDHSS' findings and recommendations. Citizens are encouraged to provide their comments about issues discussed by September 5, 2006. For a copy of the Public Health Assessment please contact one of the agencies listed at the end.*

## **Q. What are citizens' concerns?**

Citizens' concerns include:

- Cancer in the community
  - Individuals in the community surveyed residents about cancer. Some of the cancers mentioned in this survey were leukemias, lymphomas, breast, and lymph cancers.
- Other possible health effects associated with Mercer Rubber's past activities.

## **Q. What was the Mercer Rubber Company?**

- It was a rubber product manufacturing plant in operation from 1866 to 1993 located in Mercer County, New Jersey.
- The on-site buildings were demolished in 2000.
- Currently, 11 single family residences occupy this area.

## **Q. What was the reported contamination?**

Former employees reported that chemicals and waste products were dumped:

- into an unnamed creek,
- on the ground to the north and west of Sayen House, and,
- in the ice skating pond.

They also reported that stack emissions from coal fired furnaces resulted in black soot on houses and cars within one block of the plant.

## **Q. What were the results of the on-site sampling?**

After the plant closed, an on-site environmental investigation was done. The soil and sediment samples found:

- Petroleum hydrocarbons
- Volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and
- Metals

The on-site soil has been remediated. This is the area that now contains 11 houses.

Air Sampling:

- During the time of the plant's operation, volatile chemicals were emitted to the air; however, air permit and production records are not available.



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**Q. What off-site sampling information is available?**

- There have not been any tests conducted on off-site soil or surface water.
- Public wells have not shown any evidence of contamination.

**Q. What are the exposures?**

- Area residents were exposed in the past to volatile organic compounds through breathing.
- Since there are no off-site test results, residents also may have been and continue to be exposed to contaminants in soil and private wells through swallowing.
- If shallow groundwater is contaminated with volatile organic compounds, residents may also be exposed to those contaminants in indoor air through breathing.

**Q. What are the findings of the cancer incidence analysis?**

At the request of the petitioners, the NJDHSS evaluated cancer incidence among residents living near the former Mercer Rubber site. There was no overall excess in cancer incidence in the neighborhoods closest to the site. Bladder cancer was statistically significantly elevated in men, and brain and central nervous system cancers were statistically significantly elevated in females; however, there is little evidence that these cancers are a result of environmental exposures.

**Q. What are the conclusions of the health consultation?**

The on-site area of the Mercer Rubber Site currently presents “***No Apparent Public Health Hazard***” because contaminants were remediated before the houses were built.

The site also presents an “***Indeterminate Public Health Hazard***” in the past and present because there has been no off-site sampling to identify site-related contamination to which area residents may be (or may have been) exposed.

**Q. What does NJDHSS recommend?**

The NJDHSS recommends that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection conduct off-site sampling of soil and shallow groundwater in the areas where dumping was reported to have occurred.

**Q. Where can I get a copy of the health consultation?**

For a copy of the Mercer Rubber Health Consultation Public Comment Draft, please contact:

***New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services:***

Consumer and Environmental Health Services

(609) 584-5367

or on our web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/cehsweb/index.html> (see “What’s New”)

***Hamilton Township Department of Health***

409 Cypress Lane

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